

# A Brief Early History

Of The

Western Penitentiary Pennsylvania



Edward S. Wright, Esq.,

Marden — 1869 — 1901

October 15, 1909.

Wm. J. Diehl, Esq.,

President Board of Inspectors,

Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania.

My dear Sir:—

As requested by you, I have prepared and herewith submit a brief statement of the early history of the prison, with which I was connected for many years, compiled from reports as therein named, and have added some suggestions that may have some value.

I extend to your Board and the Warden my sympathy in your efforts to comply with the law enjoining separate confinement, with an excess in numbers over cells provided. I have had similar troubles.

Yours very truly,

*Edward S. Wright.*

Under the provisions of an Act of Assembly approved Third of March, 1818, it was provided that two penitentiaries should be erected by the State as follows:

1. A penitentiary, on the principle of solitary confinement for the convicts as the same is or hereafter may be established by law, shall be located on the public land adjoining the Town of Allegheny in the County of Allegheny.

2. A State penitentiary shall be constructed on the plan exhibited to the Legislature by the Inspectors of the prison of the City and County of Philadelphia.

3. A State penitentiary capable of holding two hundred and fifty prisoners, on the principle of solitary confinement for the convicts, as the same is or hereafter may be established by law, shall be located within the limits of the City or County of

Philadelphia.

\* \* \*

4. A State penitentiary shall be constructed on the plan of the penitentiary at Pittsburgh, subject to such alterations and improvements as the said Commissioners or a majority of them may, from time to time, with the approbation of the Governor, approve and direct. \* \* \* \*

An old and valuable book in your possession, entitled, "Proceedings of the Commissioners appointed by the Select and Common Councils of the City of Pittsburgh, in pursuance of an Act of Assembly passed the Third day of March A. D., 1818, entitled, An Act to provide for the erection of a State penitentiary", contains much of interest relative to the early history of this prison.

The Commissioners appointed as aforesaid, met May 20th, 1818, for the purpose of entering upon the duties of their appointments. There

were present; James Ross, Walter Lowrie, David Evans and George Stevenson. The Commissioners, having procured a draft of the Town of Allegheny and a plan of the penitentiary, and having, with the aid of James Semple as a surveyor, examined the ground, came to the following resolution, to wit: Resolved that the site of the penitentiary be fixed North of the extended course of the main street leading through the center of the Town of Allegheny from East to West, begining at a distance of fifty feet from the western boundry of said town, and extended northwardly from the parallel of the said mentioned street to a ravine running westwardly through an enclosure now occupied by James Ferguson, and to embrace ground westwardly to said boundary, as may be hereafter assigned by said Commissioners, containing about ten acres.

Magnus M. Murray was elected Clerk of

the Commissioners, and Stephen Hills, of Harrisburg, was appointed Superintendent of Construction, the latter at a salary of \$5.00 per day.

The main building was directed to be placed fronting on the road to Beaver, and a portion of the ground enclosed with a fence, and it may be here remarked that the remainder of the ground was in 1840, by an Act of Assembly, revested and restored to its original use as part and parcel of the common ground belonging to the Borough of Allegheny; but the citizens demurred to further extension and a riotous mob tore down all the fence beyond the wall line and the Prison Board thereafter abandoned any attempt to keep it, otherwise, the grounds would have extended from Sherman Avenue to the Ft. Wayne Railroad.

On July 1st, 1826, all of the buildings then completed were transferred to the Board of In-

spectors and on November 22nd, 1827, having completed its work, the Board of Commissioners dissolved.

In the final report to the Governor it is stated that the cost of the buildings erected under their supervision was \$165,846.28, leaving unexpended a balance of \$13,074.72, not drawn from the State Treasury.

The method of confinement in solitude proved most unsatisfactory and an agitation followed, resulting in the passage of an Act approved April 23rd, 1829, which provided for separate or solitary confinement at labor in the cells or work-yards of said prisons, and to give substantial and wholesome food of coarse quality sufficient for the healthful support of life, and to furnish with clothing suitable to their situation at the discretion of the Inspectors of each prison. So far as the Western Penitentiary is con-

cerned. this was changed by an Act of April 8th, 1869, which provides that the Inspectors of the Western Penitentiary be and hereby are authorized, at their discretion, to have the convicts of said Western Penitentiary, or any portion or portions of them, congregated for the purpose of labor, learning and religious services.

In the same year, by an Act of May 21st, 1869, a commutation law was enacted, granting a deduction of sentence for good conduct. This has been amended by an Act of May 11th, 1901, granting an increase in the amount of commutation.

The seventy-six cells originally constructed were inadequate even for the limited population so were entirely removed, and in 1834 the center block in the old prison was erected. Of this, John Haviland was the architect, and from this time forward it may be said that the prison population has grown faster



than its accommodations.

The system of labor introduced was mainly weaving on hand looms, one for each cell, and shoe making, in which the work-bench was at once the place of labor and chair of the cell. The population being nearly all employed from 1844 to 1854 the prison was selfsustaining, except State appropriations for officers' salaries.

In 1859 the prison walls were extended to Montgomery Avenue and then an additional block was erected, which in August, 1863, was first occupied by the one hundred and eighteen Rebel Officers captured in the Morgan Raid, who remained there until their removal in 1864. After the close of the Civil War the prison population rapidly and largely increased and it being impossible to furnish employment in the cells, some small shops were established in the large cells in the center block.

In 1869 a commodious chapel was erected. Hitherto religious services had been held in the prison blocks. Shortly after this, a small wash-house was erected adjoining the chapel and in the second story of this building a shoe shop was constructed and eighty-five men were employed therein. For their labor the prison received fifty cents per day per man. Labor in the cells had not been remunerative for many years and quoting an old report, "the gain has not been to the institution, but to the convict as a relief to fill up the measure of his time".

The Legislature was asked in 1874 to appropriate \$15,000.00 for the erection of a work-shop. This was granted and a shop was erected this year in the old prison garden. It was a two story brick structure forty-eight feet wide and two hundred feet long divided into six large rooms or shops. In these shops broom making, shoe making and marble pol-

ishing contracts were established. The earnings from August 1874 to December 31st, 1877, amounted to \$127, 712. 33.

In 1875 a new sewer was built from the prison to the Allegheny River, a portion of the old sewer built in 1836 having caved in at various points.

In a report of 1877 the Inspectors stated: "While this Penitentiary is ample and sufficient to hold and accommodate a population of from four to five hundred prisoners, it is altogether inadequate in its proportions for a family of from eight to nine hundred convicts. Just now many of our cells intended for one are doubled, tripled and quadrupled in occupancy. In the bracing Winter weather, this crowding of men may be endured, but when the hot Summer days and nights overtake us we shudder for the consequences. Disease, epidemic and death must of necessity follow."

"We look around for relief and find that

no where can it be found so promptly and satisfactorily as in pressing our idea of last year for the appropriation, by the State, of the House of Refuge grounds in the Ninth Ward, Allegheny, not now as an annex to this building but as the site of a new, enlarged and capacious Western State Penitentiary Building. \* \* And to this end we go to the Legislature for authority and means to carry out this project. Much of the labor required to put up this new structure can be performed by the convicts and much of the material required can be removed from time to time from the present building. Working from the start on a thoroughly prepared plan, any desired part of the new edifice may be completed for occupancy at intervals; so that when the whole is done we shall have a building perfect in all its proportions."

On the 14th day of May, 1878, an Act was passed by the Legislature authorizing the Gover-

nor of Pennsylvania to acquire the former property of the House of Refuge now styled the Pennsylvania Reform School, for the use and occupancy of the Western Penitentiary. This Act was approved by the Governor on the 12th day of June, 1878, and it then became a law. The Inspectors took formal possession of the property the 30th day of September, 1878. A temporary prison was established and from time to time the convicts were removed but the old buildings were not totally abandoned until the Spring of 1885, so that in reality two prisons existed from December 1878 until that time.

In 1879 the Inspectors stated: "The transfer of the House of Refuge property at Woods Run to the State for the use of the Penitentiary has been most propitious to this institution. It is a matter of wonder to us 'how many old coats we have turned and made them as good as new' out of the

multiplicity of buildings; material, machinery, etc. which we have found and assembled on these premises."

In connection with the report for 1884, details of the plans for the new buildings and prints of the same gave a good idea of the character of the work intended, but as it proved impossible to secure sufficient funds, the work of building was continued spasmodically for seventeen years before it was considered finished; yet, since that time the expense of introduction of natural gas, electric light and power plant and water works, by which the prison is supplied from driven wells, attest that the work was sadly incomplete.

By a change to associated labor it became practicable to establish a system of over-work and for many years the charges upon the counties for support, aside from the largely increased number of

prisoners, were considered most satisfactory. A table showing the charges per day per man follows:

1870	21 $\frac{3}{4}$ ct	1886	15 ct
1871	22 $\frac{3}{4}$ "	1887	20 "
1872	24 "	1888	24 "
1873	31 "	1889	24 "
1874	13 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	1890	22 "
1875	10 "	1891	27 "
1876	8 "	1892	27 "
1877	6 "	1893	28 "
1878	4 "	1894	28 "
1879	4 "	1895	23 "
1880	6 "	1896	22 "
1881	9 "	1897	22 "
1882	12 "	1898	28 "
1883	12 "	1899	25 "
1884	12 "	1900	26 "
1885	14 "	1901	29 "

Table continued:

1902	32 $\frac{4}{5}$ ct	1906	165 $\frac{5}{9}$ ct
1903	24 $\frac{4}{5}$ "	1907	205 $\frac{5}{6}$ "
1904	20 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	1908	21 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
1905	18 $\frac{1}{4}$ "		

The following is a table showing the amount of over-work for nineteen years beginning 1870 and ending 1888, in which year the over-work in the prison ceased:

1870 .....	\$	992. 87
1871 .....		629. 61
1872 .....		513. 63
1873.....		1, 408. 81
1874 .....		1, 108. 72
1875.....		1, 653. 79
1876.....		2, 027. 60
1877 .....		2, 772. 55
1878 .....		2, 483. 79



Table continued:

1879.....	4, 475. 37
1880.....	7, 540. 99
1881 .....	14, 391. 91
1882 .....	11, 688. 22
1883.....	17, 418. 49
1884.....	19, 567. 78
1885 .....	16, 160. 90
1886.....	17, 640. 33
1887.....	15, 551. 78
1888.....	6, 814. 61
Total .....	\$144, 841. 75

The following is a table showing the income from all sources from 1870 to 1908, inclusive.

1870.....	\$14, 590. 94
1871 .....	17, 468. 22
1872.....	15, 979. 71
1873 .....	16, 545. 13

Table continued.

1874.....	31, 186. 50
1875.....	46, 332. 08
1876.....	55, 022. 48
1877 ..	58, 910. 14
1878.....	51, 827. 57
1879.....	67, 784. 95
1880.....	69, 957. 78
1881.....	64, 260. 14
1882.....	63, 520. 87
1883.....	71, 357. 87
1884.....	69, 924. 14
1885.....	63, 687. 69
1886.....	62, 748. 19
1887.....	58, 173. 90
1888.....	32, 749. 45
1889.....	36, 487. 78
1890.....	42, 567. 10

Table continued.

1891.....	46, 629. 09
1892.....	59, 965. 59
1893.....	47, 995. 42
1894.....	55, 002. 50
1895.....	71, 059. 02
1896.....	74, 401. 25
1897.....	72, 305. 01
1898.....	37, 085. 40
1899.....	33, 466. 58
1900.....	32, 486. 75
1901.....	32, 112. 45
1902.....	23, 715. 70
1903.....	34, 625. 50
1904.....	39, 839. 54
1905.....	30, 192. 37
1906.....	33, 317. 83
1907.....	31, 516. 98
1908.....	28, 084. 75

The over-work of the prisoners enabled many to render substantial aid to their families and for several years the payment of over-work on the tenth of each month to the families of the prisoners was alike interesting and gratifying. The abolition of contract labor in 1883 and the later act prohibiting the use of power machinery, notably Act of the 18th of June, 1897 limiting the number to be employed on productive industries, sadly changed these conditions.

In the new prison many prisoners, for many years, rendered satisfactory services in the construction of iron cell doors and windows and doors of the blocks besides putting down concrete basement floors, etc. For their labor no charge was made to the State.

The prohibition of the use of power machinery and limitation of numbers in recent years has

sadly crippled the prison and yet the late Col. Carroll D. Wright, Commissioner of labor, stated in one of his reports, that, "if all the prisoners, (*then in the prisons within the United States,*) were placed at shoe making, its net results would not increase the cost of shoes one-fourth of a cent per pair", and for manifest reasons hand labor can not compete with power machinery.

When it is considered that 540 cells at Riverside are all five feet wide by seven feet long and 600 cells are seven feet wide by eight feet long, the height of the cells varying from eight and one-half feet to ten feet in the clear, it is manifest that constant confinement within such limits is a sad departure from the original intention. In 1878 the plans for the new buildings were submitted to the Legislature and it was distinctly stated at a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives when the President

of the Board and the Warden of the prison addressed the session, that the cells were so designed with the belief that the recent law permitting associated labor would be continued and at that time they were larger than any prison cells in the country. Since then the Federal Prisons at Leavenworth and Atlanta contain cells larger and wider.

The Board of Inspectors and Warden would favor many other changes if they were to spend a day or two in visiting the Federal Prison at Leavenworth.

As directed by an Act of Assembly approved July 2nd, 1895, the cost of and brief history of the various Penal and charitable Institutions of Pennsylvania was compiled by Alexander K. Pedrick, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Commission on Convict Labor, under the direction of Amos H. Mylin, Auditor General of Pennsylvania, and published in 1896.

The sketch of the Western Penitentiary therein deserves careful perusal. A brief extract may profitably be included in this paper: "Whitout caring to do more than shall suffice to recall olden time treatment with its tinges of barbarism, that the continued efforts of humanitarians from the days of Howard in 1776 have striven to change, until now it may be well to reflect on the results of recent beneficent legislation."

"From the entrance of a convicted criminal upon penal servitude until he is discharged, he is now encouraged by the State to enter upon the work of reformation which has ever been held the primary object to be achieved while paying the penalty of imprisonment for violation of the law. In this person, features of classification help to build up self respect and a notable reduction in sentence is given as a reward for good behavior. Many educational, moral and reformatory results are now realized from the

School, the Library, and by the steady, earnest and devoted work of the Chaplain."

"Looking backward from the experience of the past quarter of a century, it is remembered that many former prisoners have become useful and honorable men resuming and regaining lost citizenship, for it is peculiar to this State that a proper endurance of imprisonment shall have the effect of a pardon."

"In the work of control and management of the Western Penitentiary, many leading citizens and eminent gentlemen have, at different eras, contributed their time and talents, notably; Col. James Anderson, Gen. J. K. Moorhead, Judge Wilson McCandless, Theodore H. Nevin, Ormsby Phillips, James Marshall, George A. Kelly and James R. Reed; all connected with the Prison for many years. The Prison is considered by those familiar with its merits



as an admirable type of modern prison architecture and in its details of treatment, labor and reformatory results, it certainly stands very high among the correctional institutions of the country."

Among the Inspectors it may be noted that Col. James Anderson was an Inspector for twenty-three years, Theodore H. Nevin for twenty years and George A. Kelley for thirty years.

The Wardens have been nine in number: John Hannan served from 1826 to 1829; John Patterson thence to 1836; Armistead Beckham from 1836 to 1858; John Birmingham thence to 1864; Hugh Campbell from 1864 to 1867; George A. Shallenberger in 1868; Edward S. Wright from 1869 to close of 1901 Wm. McC. Johnston thence to July 1909 and John Francies since that time.

The position of Moral Instructor, now called Chaplain, was established in 1838. Six persons

have held the position: of these, Rev. Andrew W. Black from 1844 to 1853; Rev. Thomas Crumpton from 1854 to 1869; Rev. John L. Milligan from 1869 to 1909 and Rev. Charles M. Miller since that date.

As a matter of historical interest, a roll of all the superior officers of the Penitentiary from 1826 was made a part of the report for 1879. Believing it would be of interest to the descendants of all connected with the Prison, the list has been completed to date as herewith submitted:

#### INSPECTORS.

Appointed.		Retired,
1826	John Darragh	1828
"	William McCandless	"
"	John Hammen	1826
"	Hugh Davis	1829
"	Wm. Robinson, Jr.	"
"	William Lecky	"

# INSPECTORS

Apointed		Retired
1826	Charles Avery	1827
"	John S. Riddle	1828
"	Alex. Brackenridge	1829
"	Neville B. Craig	"
1827	Morris B. Lowry	"
1828	William Woods	"
"	John Snyder	"
"	James S. Craft	"
1829	James Adams	"
"	John Irwin	"
"	Richard Gray	"
"	Robert Christy	"
"	Robert Stewart	"
"	Joseph Patterson	1830
"	John McDonald	1831
"	James Ross	Declined

## INSPECTORS

Apointed		Resired
“	John Irwin	1842
“	William Wilkins	1832
1830	Wm. Robinson, Jr.	1853
“	William Hays	1832
1831	Benj. Darlington	1842
1832	James Anderson	1853
“	James Brown	1834
1834	William Lecky	1853
1843	Wilson McCandless	1859
“	J. K. Moorhead	“
1853	David Campbell	“
“	Samuel Jones	“
“	Rody Patterson	“
1859	William M. Edgar	“
“	George W. Cass	“
“	Hopewell Hepburn	1860

## INSPECTORS

Appointed		Retired
1859	Wm. H. Smith	1864
"	James Anderson	1861
"	J. H. Shoenberger	1865
1860	Christopher Zug	1864
1861	James P. Barr	"
1863	J. R. McClintock	1865
1864	James B. Lyon	1867
1864	James Marshall	1869
"	Theodore H. Neyin	1884
1865	John Birmingham	1866
"	Walter H. Lowrie	Declined
1866	George R. White	1868
"	R. H. Davis	"
1867	Ormsby Phillips	1884
1868	James H. Parker	1869
"	James A. Lowrie	1872

## INSPECTORS

Appointed		Retired
1869	Robert H. Davis	1881
“	John Dean	1884
1872	George A. Kelly	1902
1881	William Harbaugh	1883
1883	T. D. Casey	1887
“	A. L. Robinson	“
“	James McCutcheon	1905
1884	James R. Reed	1908
1887	John S. Slagle	1891
“	Wm. F. Trimble	“
1891	T. D. Casey	1895
“	J. Pressly Fleming	“
1895	Charles F. Nevin	1902
“	James S. McKean	1900
“	David B. Oliver	1908
1900	William J. Diehl	

## INSPECTORS

Appointed	Retired
1902	William N. Kerr
“	David L. Gillespie
1908	Charles A. Rook
“	William J. Langfitt

Messrs. Parker, Oliver and the present  
Board are all now living of the foregoing list.

## PRESIDENTS

Appointed	Retired
1826	John Darragh 1828
1829	Alex. Brackenridge 1829
“	James S. Craft “
“	John McDonald 1831
1831	Benj. Darlington 1838
1838	James Anderson 1853
1853	Wilson McCandless 1859
1859	J. K. Moorhead “

## PRESIDENTS

Appointed		Retired
1859	George W. Cass	1832
1863	Wm. H. Smith	1863
1864	J. H. Shoenberger	1864
1865	James B. Lyon	1866
1867	R. H. Davis	1867
1867	Theodore H. Nevin	1884
1884	Ormsby Phillips	1884
1884	George A. Kelly	1902
1902	David B. Oliver	1908
1908	William J. Diehl	

## TREASURERS

Appointed		Retired
1826	Hugh Davis	1829
1829	John Snyder	1829
1829	John Irwin	1842
1843	J. K. Moorhead	1854



## TREASURERS

Appointed		Retired
1855	Samuel Jones	1858
1859	Hopewell Hepburn	1859
1860	Christopher Zug	1864
1864	James Marshall	1869
1869	Robert H. Davis	1873
1879	George A. Kelly	1884
1884	James McCutcheon	1895
1895	James R. Reed	1908
1908	William N. Kerr	

## SECRETARIES

Appointed		Retired
1826	A. Brackenridge	1823
1828	James S. Craft	1829
"	John Irwin	"
"	William Wilkins	1831
1831	William Robinson Jr.	1853

## SECRETARIES

Appointed		Retired
1853	Hopewell Hepburn	1859
1859	Wm. H. Smith	1862
1863	James P. Barr	1863
1864	Theodore H. Nevin	1867
1867	Ormsby Phillips	1884
1884	T. D. Casey	1887
1887	James R. Reed	1895
1895	Charles F. Nevin	1902
1902	William J. Diehl	1908
1908	William J. Langfitt	

## WARDENS

Appointed		Retired
1826	John Hannen	1829
1829	John Patterson	1836
1836	Armistead Beckham	1858
1858	John Birmingham	1864

# WARDENS continued

Appointed		Retired
1865	Hugh Campbell	1868
1868	G. A. Shallenberger	1869
1869	Edward S. Wright	1901
1901	Wm. McC. Johnston	1909
1909	John Francies	

# DEPUTY WARDENS

Appointed		Retired
1868	Wm. S. Shallenberger	1869
1869	Hugh S. McKean	1895
1895	Benjamin Greaves	1902
1902	John H. Corbett	1908
1908	Edward Coslett	

# PHYSICIANS

Appointed		Retired
1826	Wm. H. Denny	1835
1826	Wm. F. Irwin	1830

## PHYSICIANS

Appointed		Retired
1835	Wm. F. Irwin	1842
1843	J. H. Smith	1844
1845	Thos. F. Dale	1853
1854	A. M. Pollock	1859
1860	Julian Rogers	1864
1865	D. N. Rankin	1900

## RESIDENT PHYSICIANS

Appointed		Retired
1891	H. L. Walker	1892
1892	D. C. Boyce	1899
1899	O. J. Bennett	1909
1908	S. F. Hogsett	1909
1909	R. L. Anderson	

## CHAPLAINS

Appointed		Retired
1838	E. Macurdy	1841

## CHAPLAINS

Appointed		Retired
1842	Noah Callender	1843
1844	Andrew W. Black	1853
1854	Thomas Crumpton	1869
1869	J. L. Milligan	1909
1909	Charles M. Miller	

## CLERKS

Appointed		Retired
1826	Thomas Baird	1829
1829	Aaron Williams	1830
1830	A. D. Pollock	1832
1832	James Wilson	1833
1833	H. Newcomb	1834
1833	John Newton	1834
1834	Jos. S. Travelli	1836
1836	William Staunton	1838
1838	Jacob Stroup	1839

## CLERKS

Appointed		Retired
1840	James Alexander	1865
1865	John Miller	1882
1883	A. F. Sawhill	1890
1890	J. Milton Ray	1897
1897	Richard C. Rankin	

## MANAGER MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

Appointed		Retired
1892	A. F. Sawhill	1897
1897	J. Milton Ray	1909
1909	Wm. Astley	

## TEACHER

1872	Joseph S. Travelli	1882
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Since that time Officer Robert H. Graham has been detailed as Teacher, but for two years past the School has not been maintained as steadily as in its earlier years.

The Eastern Penitentiary has always been conducted under the law of 1829, providing for solitary confinement or separate confinement at hard labor and Richard Vaux, said from its opening to 1849 was the epoch of "experiment" and after that as one of "development and progress". All of its Board of Inspectors stoutly upheld its peculiar features of discipline and from time to time increased its accommodations, but not fast enough to comply with the law so far as separation was directed. At last in 1904 the Inspectors said of separation, "It is an impossibility with the conditions existing in this Institution, the Board is of the opinion that if this law was changed, making the sentence 'That one or not less than three convicts be confined in one cell', the public would be much benefitted by the bettered condition, both morally and physically, of the convicts on their release from the Penitentiary".

In the report for 1908<sup>a</sup> there is much of interest to you in confirmation of the foregoing paragraph, "Practically a pioneer in the field of Penology, it has steadily developed the principles of its foundation and enlarged their scope."

"Limited by the law in the compass of its operations, every effort has been made to provide healthy and remunerative employment." \* \* \* "We have begun the employment of skilled workmen to take charge of the various mechanical pursuits within the walls, thus giving the opportunity of helping our people to become fully equipped in their respective trades."

"It is our settled conviction that it is the duty and the interest of the State to provide steady employment for its prisoners of such a character as shall conduce to a trained ability to follow a remunerative calling in the future. \* \* \* to this end some



modification of the law, governing convict labor as it now stands, would be wise, humane and just."

Deprecating enlargement of the present institution for disciplinary, hygienic and other reasons, a third penitentiary in the center of the State and a separate penitentiary for female convicts is recommended, but this seems to have been disregarded for the Legislature appropriated funds to build an additional cell block this year.

When it is recalled that thirty years ago when the Western Penitentiary commenced to erect its buildings at Riverside, the State commenced the building of the Industrial Reformatory at Huntingdon and ten years later, or to be accurate on February 15th, 1889 the Reformatory was opened; and since that date to December 31st, 1908, it has received 6528 prisoners.

Despite the relief given by the Reformatory, at the time this paper is written there are more convicts

in the three State Institutions than at any previous period and so it has ever been, the wave of crime ebbs and flows with financial crises. The only way to properly repel such a heavy charge upon the tax payers of the State, it seems to me, is to train the convicts in prison that they may be able to lawfully support themselves when free, whether the methods be productive labor sold in open market; State use account where clothing, shoes, furniture or other supplies needed by the other State Institutions are made on orders given by a central authority as in New York, or a properly equipped Trades School as at Huntingdon, or better let it be modeled on our City's pride the Carnegie Technical Schools. And if the man so trained relapses into crime, make his punishment to fit the crime.

Having spent many anxious days planning relief from excess in numbers with limited accommodations, just as you have now, I wish to say my idea

would be to erect a building for men fitted to be associated, one story high, occupied and controled like a barrack in the regular army, retrograde to cells for breaches of regulations. Do a little of the trusting yourselves instead of discharging from cellular confinement with a very small gratuity, shabby clothing and a Good By, and then wonder why the poor fellow cannot get work. Do we believe in our hearts that all possible has been done for him. Let the State do part of the preparation for an honest life. Silence in prison is generally supposed to be proper discipline yet some prisons permit a five-minute conversation at the close of each meal. Your Music Hour has long ago proved valuable as a change and relief to the nerves; try, by the help of an officer to have charge as physical Instructor to start Setting Up exercises as a part of an enlarged Prison School education; it might be helpful, very helpful and like the Music Hour be made a permanent feature. The

Eastern Penitentiary is trying it and I hope the next Legislative Session in 1911 may pass an act giving all the State Penal Institutions authority to do so.

December 21, 1909

Edward S. Wright, Esq.,  
846 Western Avenue,  
North Side,  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Sir:

I am instructed by the Board of Inspectors of the Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania to return to you their sincere thanks for the very great service you have rendered the institution in preparing "A Brief Statement and History of the Western Penitentiary."

The article is not only interesting and instructive in itself, but likewise extremely valuable, and will prove more so as the years go by.

Yours, with kindest regards,

Warden

